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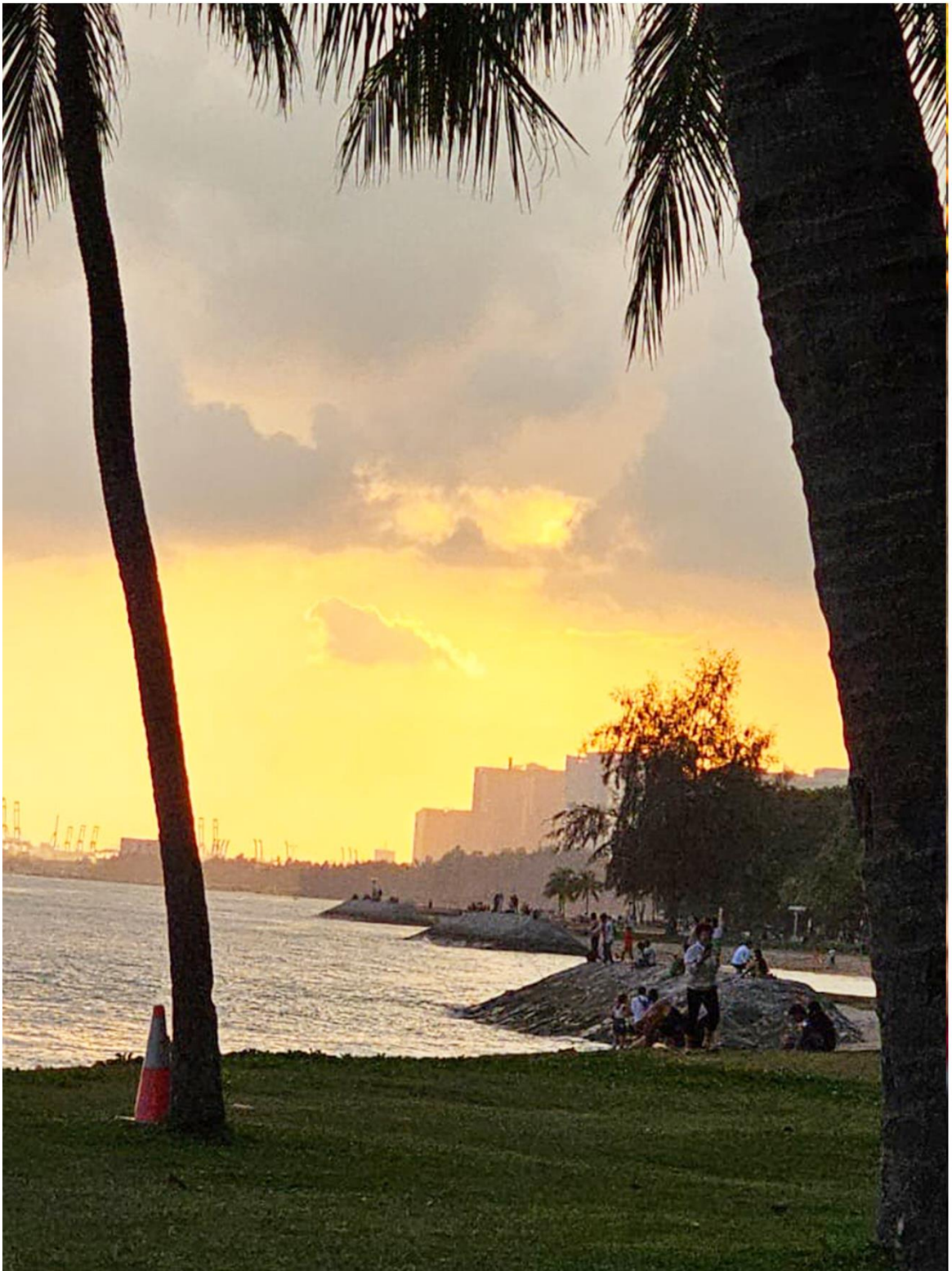
Buddhist & Pali College of Singapore Alumni (BPCA) - Quarterly E-Bulletin



Jan - Mar 2024

Photo credit: Sis Tyy Yn

The Buddhist and Pali College (BPC) of Singapore reached a significant milestone on 7 January 2024, with the official commencement of the Chinese Diploma in Buddhism course. The course offers another in-depth exploration of Buddhism and provides an educational platform for individuals seeking to deepen their understanding of Buddhism.

The BPC Alumni (BPCA) Committee is also excited to share two new series of activities which started in Jan 2024:

- **Bi-monthly Mindfulness Walks** is a new series of activities launched by the BPCA Committee. For now, this involves walking along with Venerables from Mangala Vihara (MV) to East Coast Park and back, observing “Noble Silence”. Check out photos of the scenic walks, summaries of the Dhamma Talks delivered by the Venerables as part of the Walks and registration details for the Walks in April and May.

- **Monthly Dhamma Talks** co-organised with Mangala Vihara Dhamma Fellowship (MVDF). Read on for the synopsis of the first Dhamma Talk, “Patience”, delivered by Ven. Sirisumana.

In this issue of the e-bulletin, we also brought you highlights of the Lunar New Year gathering, where the current students and teachers bond over games and food.

Lastly, you are most welcome to contribute an article to the e-Bulletin or recommend your BPC alumni friend who may have something to share. Just drop Sister Tyy Yn an email at tyyynquek@gmail.com.

May all be well, happy and peaceful!

The Editorial Team

Diploma in Buddhism (Chinese)

By Sis Lim Ai Leng 7 January 2024

Exciting news! The Chinese Diploma in Buddhism course officially commenced on 7 January 2024. This marked a significant milestone for the Buddhist and Pali College (BPC) of Singapore, which celebrated 30 years of tirelessly turning the Dhamma wheel and fostering a dedicated spiritual community in Singapore in Sep 2023.

This course is poised to be a valuable resource, offering another in-depth exploration of Buddhism and providing an educational platform for individuals seeking to deepen their understanding. It reflects a commitment to make the profound teachings of Buddhism more accessible to a diverse range of participants.

During the orientation, Ven. Seelananda Thero, the Chief Resident Monk of Mangala Vihara and the Principal of BPC Singapore, expressed his joy in inaugurating the Diploma in Buddhism class conducted in Chinese.

In his Welcome Address, he disclosed that the concept originated from the Buddhist and Pali University in Sri Lanka more than five years ago. It has come to fruition this year, overcoming challenges posed by the pandemic and various other factors.

Ven. Seelananda also extended his encouragement to students to consider pursuing further studies at the degree level (in English) upon completing the Diploma in Buddhism (Chinese) course.

Dr. Lim Ah Swan, Chairman of the Mangala Vihara Management Committee, shared a personal connection by revealing that he was part of the first batch of students at BPC Singapore. Drawing inspiration from the Buddha's teachings, he emphasized the transformative power of education as the path to miracles. Dr. Lim's words underscored the profound impact that education, especially in the context of Buddhist teachings, can have on an individual's life journey.

Brother Jebsons Chia, Chairman of the BPC Alumni Committee, expressed his delight at witnessing a substantial number of individuals signing up for the class. In addition to conveying his happiness about the enthusiastic response, he seized the opportunity to elucidate the objectives of the BPC alumni. He highlighted the diverse range of activities organized by the committee, including the Chinese New Year tea party, regular newsletter updates, and overseas pilgrimage tours. These initiatives were designed to foster a sense of community and connection among both current students and alumni, providing them with opportunities to come together and form bonds through their shared journey at BPC.

During the orientation, the students were provided with the course syllabus and timetable. All the Chinese Diploma teachers were present to celebrate the launch of this new course, offering encouraging words to inspire students to actively participate and appreciate the learning opportunities. Additionally, the students received a key reference book, a Chinese-translated copy of "The Buddha and His Teachings" by Ven. Narada Maha Thera, through a generous dana by The Corporate Body of The Buddha Educational Foundation from Taiwan.

As BPC Singapore undertakes this new educational venture, may it persist in achieving success and fostering the spiritual growth and well-being of its participants. Our sincere gratitude goes to Ven. Seelananda Thero, Ven. Puññāji Thero, Ven. Vajira and the dedicated teachers who have invested their time and commitment in undertaking this teaching assignment. We also extend our appreciation to all others who have lent their helping hand in shaping the commencement of the Chinese Diploma. Once again, we welcome the Chinese Diploma students and best wishes in this exciting chapter of educational offerings!

Diploma in Buddhism (Chinese) 2024 Class Photo @Orientation Day

Dhamma Talk: Patience

Delivered by Ven. Sirisumana on 15 January 2024

Article written by Sis Tyy Yn

The Buddhist and Pali College of Singapore Alumni (BPCA) Committee is gratified to partner with Mangala Vihara Dhamma Fellowship (MVDF) to organise the monthly Dhamma Talks from 2024. We were grateful to Ven. Sirisumana for accepting our invitation to be the first speaker and for delivering the talk on "Patience".

Scan the QR code or click on this link to view the Dhamma Talk video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TjCFLe1ae9U

Here's a synopsis of Ven. Sumana's Talk:

Part 1: Patience in General

A. What is Patience?

Patience is…

- A virtue
- A perfection

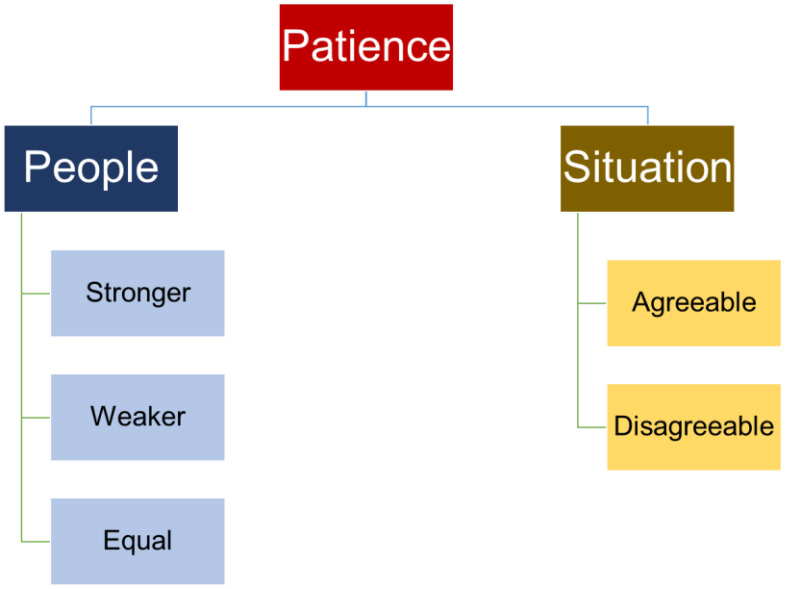
Common meaning: The ability to endure a long wait calmly or deal with "annoying problems" without frustration through controlling mental, verbal and physical actions.

B. Why do we need to be patient?

We have two choices: To be a civilised human being or a werewolf, just like the picture →

How one may look when one gets impatient.

C. What makes us impatient?



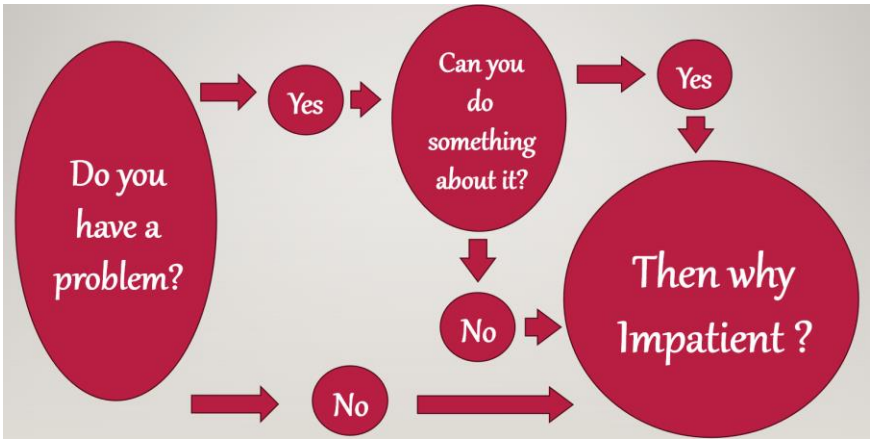
Quick tips to manage people and situations with patience:

- People who are stronger (e.g., boss): Let's be mentally, physically and socially better than them. If unable, practise being patient and do not harbour jealousy.
- People who are weaker: Let's be compassionate towards them and support them kindly, with patience.
- People who are equal: Let's have healthy competition, be mindful and be a good friend, supporting each other and journeying together.
- Disagreeable situation: Let's see them as they are. Be patient while the situation persists, otherwise we will continue to see or experience disagreeable/unpleasant situations.

Setting a boundary for our patience (akin to "situational/conditional patience") is not a correct practice of patience as it is driven by self-identity i.e., it is insufficient to be patient only because (a) **I** am outpowered, (b) it might ruin **my** reputation, (c) it is the first (few) time(s) someone is doing something that irritates **me** or (d) of circumstances that are confronting **me** (e.g., situation prevailing at that time when I need help from that person).

D. How do you develop patience?

This is an excellent and easy-to-follow framework shared by Bhante:



Developing Patience – *a reflection*

I could resonate with Ven. Sirisumana's advice that maintaining an optimistic outlook when faced with any situation is one of the most effective methods to develop patience. It frees me from being overwhelmed (as I would otherwise need to overcome the negative feelings before dealing with the situation). Besides, accepting things that I can't change, knowing that it is ok to say "no", taking a break when I am exhausted to recharge, and simply slowing down for others are practical reminders for me. Not only will I be at ease, I will also not be stressing others. 😊

Part 2: Patience as a form of virtue

This comprises the following:

1. Virtuous Action - rational choice motivated by a desire for what is good in this life and the next, validated ultimately by attaining the final goal of Nibbāna, i.e., do what is good for here and now, and thereafter.

2. Mindfulness - being alert, ardent and intent; and experiencing with comprehension and awareness of what is happening without judgment or interference, i.e., being in the present moment.

3. Non-self - there is no unchanging, permanent self, soul or essence in phenomena.

Whenever we are practising with the above in mind, we are already being patient; there are no suppressed feelings, and we can sustain our efforts to be patient.

Because of non-self, there is no point in being impatient or angry with someone. He/she is ever-changing, physically and mentally (and the same goes for us). So why do we hang on to the unwholesome thoughts of "someone" who is no longer the person who triggered our impatience or anger?

To develop the fundamental understanding of non-self, we need to practise mindfulness, coupled with virtuous actions.

Three levels of patience were introduced with accompanying references from the Pāli canon as illustrations.

Level 1: Wavering patience

The Buddha shared a story where another ascetic sect tried to defame him and his disciples by staging and accusing them of murdering a female ascetic, Paribbajika Sundari. The Buddha advised his disciples to pay no heed to the accusations and to maintain their calmness and patience, instead of trying to avoid the situation and shift to another city. He taught his disciples to recite *Dhammapada Verse 306*:

> *"Those who lie and those who deny their unwholesome deeds will suffer equally."*

As the people saw how calm the Sangha was despite the accusations, they started to reflect and investigate. Within 7 days, the shouting and accusations subsided as the Buddha said, and the wrongdoers were found and brought to justice.

Be guided by the Dhamma to face unpleasant situations and patiently learn how to manage them. If we run away from it then, we often find the same problems surfacing in the new environment. We can't keep running away from them.

Level 2: Enduring patience

In *Sabbhasava Sutta*, the Buddha outlined seven methods of dealing with defilements/taints; and pointed out that when one dwells restrained of all the defilements/taints, one has severed craving, flung off the fetters, and with the complete penetration of conceit, made an end of suffering. Of the seven methods, there is one that deals with defilements to be abandoned by enduring:

> *"One should endure cold, heat, hunger, and thirst; the touch of flies, mosquitoes, wind, sun, and reptiles; ill-spoken, unwelcome words and bodily feelings that, when they arise, are painful, racking, sharp, piercing, disagreeable and displeasing to life."*

Meditation practices (e.g., Four foundation of mindfulness) help us to handle these persistent problems in our daily lives. It is important to practice while we are healthy and able to.

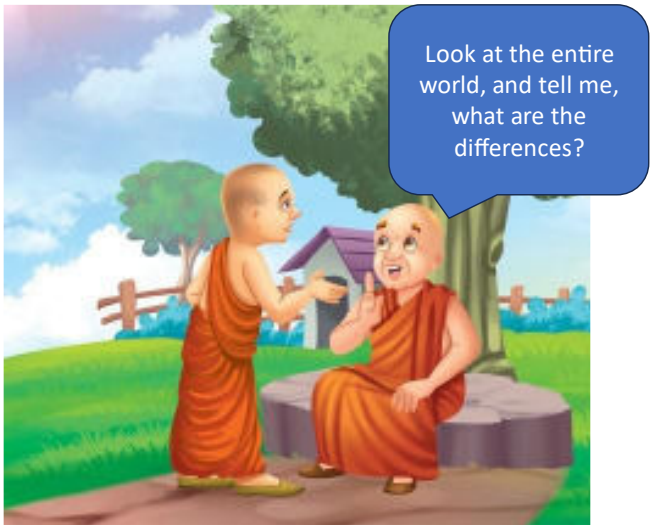
Level 3: Forgiving patience

From *Sīhanāda Sutta*, we learnt of Ven. Sāriputta's forgiving patience as he faced the accusation of a certain monk who complained to the Buddha that Ven. Sāriputta attacked him and left without saying sorry. Ven. Sāriputta explained his practice as follows:

- Suppose they were to toss both clean and unclean things on the earth, like faeces, urine, spit, pus, and blood. The earth isn't horrified, repelled, and disgusted because of this… in the same way, he lived with a heart like the earth, abundant, expansive, limitless, free of enmity and ill will. (other similes used include water, fire, wind, rag, an outcast and a bull with broken horns).

Ven. Sāriputta's remarkable equanimity and patience moved the monk who accused him so much that he sought the forgiveness of the Buddha and Ven. Sāriputta for his false, hollow, lying and untruthful claim.

Ven. Sirisumana also used the progress of a Zen student to illustrate the three levels of patience:



Picture credit: Sawan Books

Level 1:
Zen student: "Trees are trees, flowers are flowers, mountains are mountains."

- *Seeing things on the surface/in their outer forms, we try hard to practise patience.*

Level 2:
Zen student (excitedly): "Trees are not trees, flowers are not flowers, mountains are not mountains."

- *Seeing things in different perspectives, we practise and cultivate patience.*

Level 3:
Zen student (calm and composed): "Trees are trees, flowers are flowers, mountains are mountains."

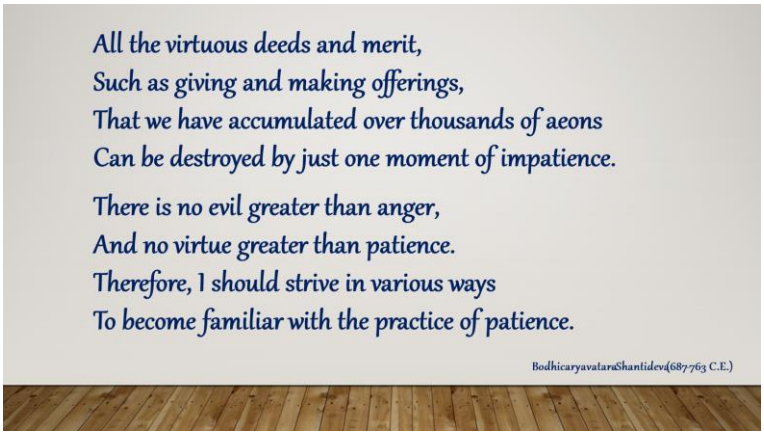
- *Seeing things as they really are.*
- *Transcending the extremes of the wholesome and unwholesome, patience pervades our life journey.*

The path to training and developing patience is always tough at the beginning; as we practise, we take control and it becomes easier. We will get excited with our progress. However, at the highest level, we see that there is no good and bad/black and white – we begin to see people around us as "people", not as "good people" or "bad people".

Part 3: Patience as a perfection (*pārami*)

Pārami refers to:

1. Carrying one to the other shore (*Nibbāna*) across the ocean (*samsara*).
2. The supremacy of the qualities that need to be developed by one who aspires to be enlightened.


All the virtuous deeds and merit,
Such as giving and making offerings,
That we have accumulated over thousands of aeons
Can be destroyed by just one moment of impatience.
There is no evil greater than anger,
And no virtue greater than patience.
Therefore, I should strive in various ways
To become familiar with the practice of patience.
Bodhicaryavatara Shantideva (687-763 C.E.)

We should practise patience for self-development.

When we are living with patience with ourselves and others, we are a role model to others to learn and practise patience.

Other Pāli canon references on Patience include: *Kakacūpama Sutta (MN21), Rāhulovā Sutta (MN61), Āḷavaka Sutta (SN10.12) and Akkosa Sutta (SN7.2).*

Lunar New Year Bonding

18 February 2024

The Lunar New Year (LNY) Bonding event was organised by the Buddhist and Pali College Alumni (BPCA) Committee at Mangala Vihara Buddhist Temple (MV), on 18 February 2024. Current Diploma and Bachelor of Arts students and teachers were invited, including Mr Lim Ah Swan, Chairman of the MV Management Committee, who is also a BPC teacher.

The LNY event started with Ven. P. Seelananda, BPC Principal, who gave a Dhamma talk and Mr Jebsons Chia, BPCA Chairman, welcoming all to the event and wishing all attendees a Happy Chinese New Year.

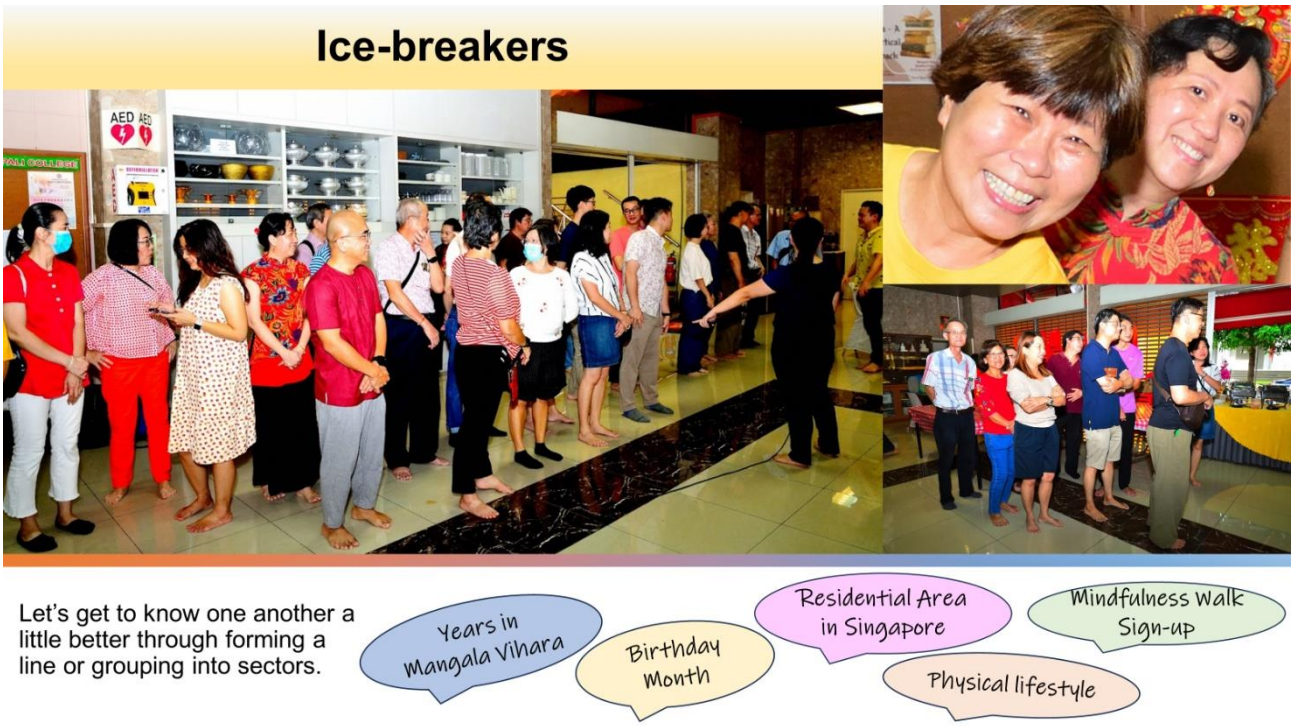
Dhammapada Verse 204
Pasenadikosala Vatthu

Ārogyaparamā lābhā,	Health is the greatest gift
Santuṭṭhiparamaṁ dhanaṁ;	Contentment is the greatest wealth
Vissāsaparamā ñāti,	A trusted friend is the best relative
Nibbānaṁ paramaṁ sukhaṁ.	Nibbāna is the greatest bliss

Dhamma Talk by Ven. P. Seelananda

Event hosts, Sister Tyy Yn and Brother Bryan, then led the attendees in the traditional LNY lo hei.

This was followed by ice-breakers to enable the attendees to know each other better.


Ice-breakers
Let's get to know one another a little better through forming a line or grouping into sectors.
Years in Mangala Vihara
Birthday Month
Residential Area in Singapore
Physical lifestyle
Mindfulness Walk Sign-up

The attendees also formed random groups to take part in a quiz to get to know Buddhism, MV and BPC better.

The Winning Team of the LNY Quiz with Ven. Seelananda

After the excitement, the attendees continued to bond over tea and the event ended with a group photo.

Lunar New Year Bonding 2024

Photo Credits: Bro KK Lau

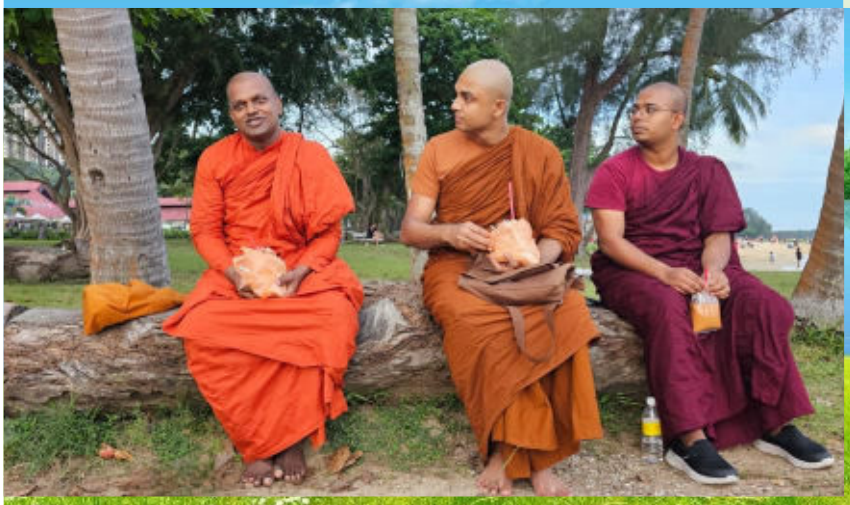
Mindfulness Walk

Jan – Mar 2024

The Buddhist and Pali College Alumni (BPCA) committee started bi-monthly Mindfulness Walks in January 2024, as trial runs with its committee members, led by Ven. Anoma, Ven. Sirisumana and Ven. Suneetha over three sessions. This is to ensure that the route is suitable for beginners, the pace is appropriate for those who do not exercise regularly, and for safety considerations.

Following the successful trial runs, the inaugural Mindfulness Walk was held on 25 February 2024, with a second Walk conducted on 9 March 2024. Current Diploma and Bachelor of Arts (BA) students and BPC teachers were invited. Each walk took about 2 hours to complete, starting from Mangala Vihara Buddhist Temple (MV) to East Coast Park and back to MV. Participants began with a series of warm-up exercises led by Brother Jebsons. During the walks, participants observed “Noble Silence” as they focused on walking mindfully. The highlight of the Mindfulness Walks was the Dhamma talks which the Venerables gave when the participants reached East Coast Park. Read on for the synopsis of the Dhamma Talks!

Benefits of Walking Meditation



AN 5.29 Cankama Sutta

"Bhikkhus, there are these five benefits of walking meditation. What five?

1. One becomes capable of journeys
2. One becomes capable of striving
3. One becomes healthy
4. What one has eaten, drunk, consumed, and tasted is properly digested
5. The concentration attained through walking meditation is long lasting.

These are the five benefits of walking meditation."

AN 1.11-20 (A i3)
Nīvaraṇappahāṇa Vagga

I do not see, bhikkhus, any other thing by which non-arisen dullness and drowsiness do not arise and arisen dullness and drowsiness are abandoned as much as, bhikkhus, effort, exertion and endeavour. For one of resolved effort, bhikkhus, non-arisen dullness and drowsiness do not arise and arisen dullness and drowsiness are abandoned.

AN 8.80, *Kusītārambhavatthu Sutta and Yamaka Vagga*

- Effort required to begin a particular action *(ārambha dhātu viriya)*
- Effort required to sustain an action despite obstacles *(nikkama dhātu viriya)*
- Effort required to continue till the completion of an action *(parakkama dhātu viriya)*

Importance of Efforts

Applying the Buddha's teachings on the three stages of efforts, members of the Mindfulness Walk Active Group will be able to persevere and participate in the Walks organised.

The three stages of efforts are:

1. **Effort to begin participation** in the bi-monthly Mindfulness Walks
2. **Effort to sustain** the frequency of participation
3. **Effort to continue till completion** of the Walks e.g., to conclude with a 2D1N Mindfulness Walk camp.

What Mindfulness Walk is…

1. Imagine being in a battlefield, with arrows coming from 6 different directions towards us (i.e. towards our 6 sense doors of eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind).

   Walking with Noble Silence enables us to shield off some of these random arrows as it enables us to be mindful of our senses, especially our body.

   To be more mindful of our body, consider:
   - Counting steps
   - Feeling the movements/sensations of any parts of our body e.g. our feet/heels rising up and touching down, our hands swinging to and fro

2. Observing our surrounding, we see impermanence e.g., water in the canal, the changing clouds – try seeing things as they are, and not delve into our likes and dislikes.

Being mindful is like …

Having a shield/armour to protect us against the arising of likes and dislikes in our mind

Putting up a firewall in our computers/laptops to keep away the thoughts of likes and dislikes

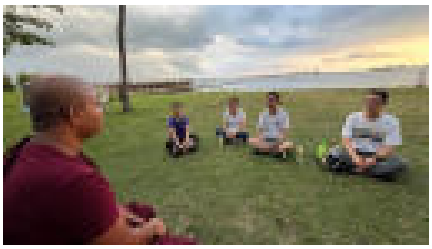
Awareness of what's happening in our mind helps us to reduce the arising of likes and dislikes and we know which to develop and which to abandon.

Being mindful means we are in control of our senses. We are able to restrain them instead of being led by our wandering minds.

Walking Together as a Group…

"One can walk fast when one walks alone."

"But together, we can go further."



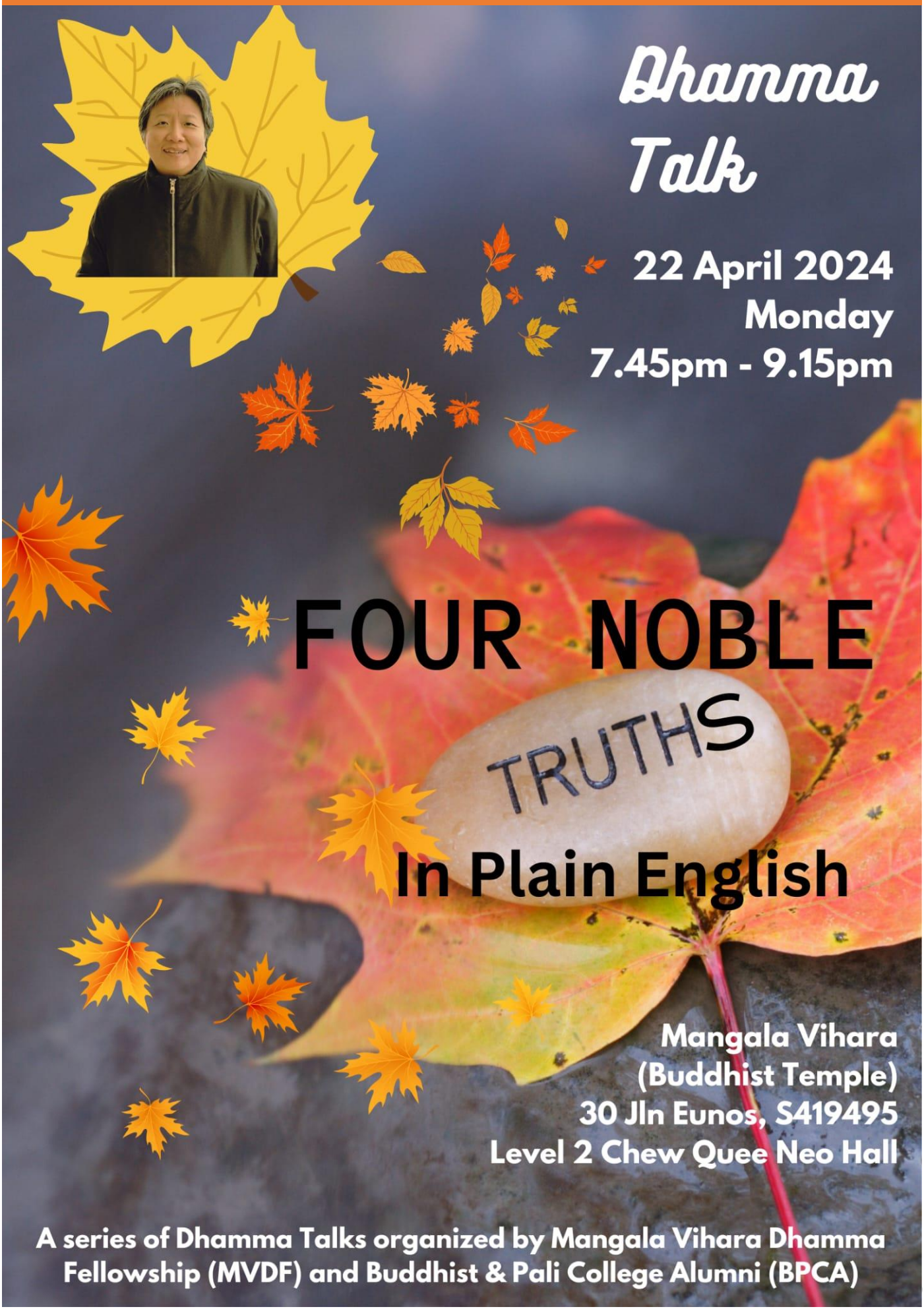
Importance of collaboration

- During a team activity like the Mindfulness Walk with a big group, we need to walk at a pace that suits everyone, so that everyone can complete the walk together.
- Similarly, in our daily lives, we need to work with people of different personalities, capabilities and objectives. Sometimes, it may mean we need to review our expectations so that together, we can achieve more.

Upcoming Activity

BE PART OF THE MINDFULNESS WALK ACTIVE GROUP
(open to current teachers , students and alumni of BPC and MVDF for now and limited to first 40 participants only)
MINDFULNESS WALK EVENT
Walk along with Bhantes, from Mangala Vihara to East Coast Park and back through park connector network, observing "Noble Silence"
13 APR 2024
28 APR 2024
11 MAY 2024
26 MAY 2024
5.20 PM - 8 PM
Journey starts and ends at Mangala Vihara
Register here!
Any queries contact:
Bro Chun Leong 8879 5778
Sis Tyy Yn 9692 7269

Upcoming Activity

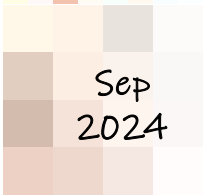

Dhamma Talk
22 April 2024
Monday
7.45pm - 9.15pm
FOUR NOBLE TRUTHS
In Plain English
Mangala Vihara
(Buddhist Temple)
30 Jln Eunos, S419495
Level 2 Chew Quee Neo Hall
A series of Dhamma Talks organized by Mangala Vihara Dhamma Fellowship (MVDF) and Buddhist & Pali College Alumni (BPCA)

Other Upcoming Activities

- **5 May**: **Temple Tour for Chinese Diploma Class**

- **Introduction to Buddhism (in English)**
  Course date to be confirmed

- **25 August: Graduation Ceremony**



- **14 September: Diploma in Buddhism – Preview at MV**
- **21 September: Diploma in Buddhism – Preview at PMT**
- **Introduction to Buddhism (in Chinese)**
  Course date to be confirmed

For more information, please contact:

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